



Forest Heights Police Department Policy and Procedures Manual

Subject:	Impounding (Towing) and Inventory of Vehicles Without and With an Altered VIN			
General Order No.	2016-1	Effective Date:	January 1, 2016	
Chapter: 12	Section: 9	Number of Pages:	2	Replaces: GO 2000-48, 2000-68
Original issue: 01/01/16		Revised:		

A. Purpose

To establish procedures for the Forest Heights Police Department (FHPD) regarding impounding (towing) and inventorying impounded (towed) vehicles.

B. Procedures

When officers impound a motor vehicle for a motor vehicle law violation, vehicle crash or as an abandoned vehicle officers will:

1. Inventory the vehicle and list all items of value on the officer's report. Items that are small and could be easily stolen such as money, portable radio, cell phone, etc., will be removed and turned in on a property records form.
2. Prepare a Vehicle Release Form and give to the owner (if owner is on the scene), unless the vehicle is being held for processing associated with an investigation.
3. Advise the owner to make arrangements to pick up the vehicle as soon as possible to avoid additional storage fees.
4. If the owner of the vehicle is not available the officer will:
 - a. mail a notification of impoundment letter to the owner's last known residence address; and
 - b. file a copy of the letter with the vehicle report.
5. Complete a Vehicle Report on all vehicles the officer orders towed. If a parking ticket is written for the vehicle, the violator's copy will be attached to the Vehicle Release when it is turned into the FHPD office.

C. Impounding (Towing) Parked Vehicles

1. Officers may impound vehicles when the vehicle:
 - a. is parked in a manner that creates a hazard;
 - b. is rendered inoperable as the result of a crash;
 - c. the vehicle operator is arrested for a violation and the vehicle must be impounded for safekeeping; or
 - d. Pursuant to §15.7 of the Town Ordinance Code.

D. Abandoned Motor Vehicles

Where a vehicle is parked on a public street in an abandoned condition or in violation of the 72 hour parking restriction, or as defined in §15.2 of the Town Ordinance Code, proper notice of the intent to impound the vehicle will be given to the vehicle owner. For such situations officers will:

1. Pursuant to §15.7(B) of the Town Ordinance Code, place a Tow Sticker on the driver's side of the windshield indicating the date the vehicle will be towed.
2. Initiate an Miscellaneous Incident Report (MIR) Report on the vehicle as an abandoned vehicle and turn it in.
3. A parking citation may be issued for the violation and placed on the vehicle.

E. Show Cause Hearing Request

1. The vehicle owner may request a Show Cause Hearing before the FHPD Chief of Police pursuant to §15.8H. of the Town Ordinance Code to determine if probable cause exists to impound the vehicle.
2. If the owner does not request a hearing or the hearing is held and the Chief of Police

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determines that probable cause exists, the Chief will assign an officer to tow the Vehicle.

3. **NOTE:** Vehicles will only be towed in those instances where the vehicle is creating a hazardous or emergency condition. A vehicle blocking a private driveway or public street would be considered to be causing a hazardous condition. 72 hours after proper parking violation notice was given.

F. Impounding Vehicle with Altered Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)

1. When impounding a vehicle for a VIN violation have the contract towing company for the Prince George's County Evidence Bay, which is currently Ryon's Towing; take the vehicle to the DillyTract (Vehicle Audit Unit) at 7600 Barlowe Road Landover, MD 20785.
2. If the Dilly Tract is closed, then Ryan's Towing will take the vehicle to its impound lot, and the next business day take the vehicle to the Dilly Tract.
3. With the vehicle stored at the Dilly Tract, the Auto Theft Unit can examine the vehicle in a secure and private area. The Prince George's County regulates the storage charges for a vehicle stored at the Dilly Tract, which reduces the civil liability and complaints for both the county and the officer. This helps the Auto Theft Unit in that all the VIN violations are at one location, allowing more time to be devoted directly to the investigations.
4. Officers will send a copy of the impound report via departmental mail to the Auto Theft Unit so that the investigators can be assigned the case in a timely manner. If the report is sent through the records section, valuable time is lost and the possibility exists that the Auto Theft Unit may not receive the report.
5. A telephone call to the Auto Theft Unit informing them of the vehicle is recommended. It is recommended officers have the current telephone number available to them.
6. On all vehicle related reports, include the following information:
 - a. victim(s);
 - b. witnesses;
 - c. reporting persons;
 - d. insurance information;
 - e. suspects;
 - f. make and model of vehicle Example: Toyota Camry, not Toyota LE;
 - g. complete VIN; and
 - h. vehicle owner's information
7. A complete VIN on 1981 and later vehicles contains 17 characters; count them when writing them out to ensure there are 17 characters.
8. Ensure the VIN is written staggered with the alpha characters up and the numeric characters down.

Example: Y SK XGZ
 12 345 678901
9. Use the NCIC color codes, found on the report code overlay sheet, so the correct vehicle color can be distinguished.

Example: blk - black blu - blue
10. If the vehicle with the altered VIN is occupied, the Prince George's County Police Department Auto Theft Unit officers will respond to the scene. Request the dispatcher to contact the Auto Theft Unit.